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ABSTRACT

This document contains two essays--the first on public education, and the second on private education. The first essay, entitled, "Our Schools and Our Future," points out a paradox--public-opinion polls show widespread public receptivity to fundamental changes in the education system; however, this attitude is accompanied by widespread complacency about the performance of the education system. The paper outlines 10 essential elements of a reformed system, some of which include: clear standards and outcome goals; compulsory school attendance; more time spent on learning; a systemwide core curriculum; and school choice for students, teachers, and parents. The second essay, "Private and Parochial Schools in the Education Revolution," examines the current situation of private education and speculates as to its future. The essay describes a growing convergence between public and private education, as public school reform adopts features traditionally associated with private education, and reviews states' actions in school choice. Four implications for the future of private education are stated: (1) Any significant policy action that may benefit private education will happen outside the Beltway; (2) the radicalization of public-school reform may not benefit private schools; (3) private schools could be threatened by ventures that invent and then install a nationwide chain of new proprietary schools; and (4) a preoccupation with measurable, cognitive learning outcomes may result in homogenization of curriculum and fail to justify to parents the cost of private education. The paper argues that private education does not seem to be making maximum use of its independence; it is not yet doing as well as it should and is not improving fast enough. A fundamental political revolution is needed, which will turn education from a system dominated by the interests of its producers into one that is run for the benefit of its consumers. (LMI)

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Our Schools and Our Future

&

Private and Parochial Schools in the Education Revolution

Chester E. Finn, Jr.

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April 1992

Foreword

Chester E. Finn, Jr. showed once again why he is the nation's leading education critic when he made his just-about annual Minnesota visit last November. Speaking twice -- first to a Center of the American Experiment Luncheon Forum, and then to the annual meeting of the Minnesota Federation of Citizens for Educational Freedom -- he gave two splendid addresses, the first mainly on public education, and second on private schools. American Experiment is proud to publish both papers under one cover, for which we thank both Dr. Finn and Citizens for Educational Freedom.

This is the second time we have published Checker (as Dr. Finn is known). The first was almost two years ago, when we released his keynote address to the Center's inaugural conference, on poverty, in April 1990. I had asked him to deal with two nasty problems: What ought society do when families crumble? And what ought government do when children are endangered?

That paper, "Ten Tentative Truths," has been republished in a number of journals, made its mark at the White House and elsewhere, and caused columnist Bill Raspberry to write: "You might find yourself wishing that our social policy leadership, public and private, had the insight to see (and the guts to say) what Finn has said."

"Ten Tentative Truths" was that good, as are the two essays that follow: "Our Schools and Our Future," and "Is There a Role for Private and Parochial Schools in the Education Revolution?" A few paragraphs from each (the first paper first):

> There's a kind of widespread schizophrenia in which people seem, on the one hand, to acknowledge that we have a very serious national education problem but also seem, on the other hand, to be reasonably content with their own and their children's education and with their local schools. . . . Consider the implications for education reform:
>
> If children think they're doing pretty well, if parents think their children are doing well, if people think their local schools are doing well, and if teachers and administrators in those schools agree with this appraisal, as do local policymakers, why should anyone feel inclined to alter his or her actual behavior, to demand different results from themselves or their children, or to agitate for significant changes in the schools their children attend?

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And from the second paper, about private education:

> It's something close to a public policy sin to allow wealthy people to select the public or private school they prefer while keeping poor people trapped in schools where they are able to afford to live, especially since those are often the least successful schools in the land.
>
> And it's just plain crazy in a society that permits people a wide choice of what to eat, what to wear, where to live, what doctor to use, what church to worship in, what newspaper to read, what day care program to send their toddlers to, what college to send their 18 year olds to -- crazy not to permit those same people to decide what elementary or secondary school they'll send their children to.

Even though Checker delivered these two papers within a day of each other, there is very little redundancy. That which does exist (or seems to exist) pertains largely to empirical data on how American students are doing, and appears in the early pages of both speeches. Don't bypass the second paper because of its parallels to the first at the start. On a stylistic note, we have retained the speeches' oral flavor, as they originally *were* spoken texts.

For an elaboration of the points made in these two papers, I would urge you to get a copy of Checker's latest book, *We Must Take Charge: Our Schools and Our Future*, published in 1991 by Free Press ($22.95). Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander said of it: "This book saved me six months. It explains the educational successes and -- more to the point -- the failures of the 1980s and frames the 90s debate better than anything else I have seen." He was right.

Dr. Finn is identified in the lefthand column of the previous page as a member of the American Experimenf Board of Directors. More fully, he is a professor of education and public policy at Vanderbilt University, director of the Educational Excellence Network, in Washington, D.C., and a friend of long-standing. Among many other assignments, he served for three years as assistant secretary for research, and counselor to the secretary, in the U.S. Department of Education during the Reagan administration -- where I was privileged to work for him.

Come this July, he takes on a fundamentally new job, as founding partner of the Edison Project of Whittle Schools L.P., a major attempt to "invent and then install a nationwide chain of new proprietary schools that will meet world-class standards . . ." If he and his colleagues succeed, as I suspect they will, it will be a great victory all around: For kids, for our nation and, not incidentally, for the free market and those who believe it needs to be imaginatively tapped if American education is to work.

Additional copies of this two-paper set are available for $5 ($4 for American Experiment members). Bulk discounts are available for schools and other organizations. Call (612) 338-3605 for membership and other information. Thanks very much and I welcome your comments.

Mitchell B. Pearlstein
President

OUR SCHOOLS AND OUR FUTURE

Chester E. Finn, Jr.

Center of the American Experiment
Minneapolis, Minnesota
November 8, 1991

My topic is K-12 education and what to do about it. I have a 10-part proposal to lay on you, an abbreviated version of my book,[1] and I'll get to that in a moment. First, though, I want to share a bit of data about Minnesota. Then I want to suggest some reasons why I think the reforms we've tried so far haven't been succeeding. If we don't analyze why past efforts aren't working, we may not fare any better in the future.

The weak performance of our education system has been amply documented. What's new this year is the first decent state-by-state comparative data, drawn from the 1990 math assessment of the National Assessment of Educational Progress. It's limited to 8th graders and to public school students. But I think you'll find it interesting.

Forty jurisdictions participated in this voluntary exercise. In strict-rank order, Minnesota's 8th graders came in fifth, just below North Dakota, Montana, Iowa and Nebraska, just ahead of Wisconsin, New Hampshire, Wyoming and Idaho. I don't believe you should be smug about this, however. I've detected a slight tendency in this state to look at education data such as these and conclude that everything's basically OK up here. Note that while 82 percent of your 8th graders were succeeding with 5th grade math, just one in five of them was succeeding with the 7th grade variety -- that is 20 percent, compared to a national average of 12 percent. Better than most of the rest of the country, yes, but none too terrific.

Let me broaden the point for the country as a whole. Virtually all our eighth graders are successfully handling math concepts of the kind commonly introduced by 3rd grade (addition and subtraction of whole numbers, that sort of thing). In that sense you can say we've made it "back to the basics." And that was well worth doing. But barely three-fifths of U.S. 8th graders are functioning at the level we associate with 5th grade math: multiplication and division, problems with more than one step, etc. (This is where Minnesota registers four-fifths.) And only about one in seven is having success with problems involving fractions, decimals, percents and simple algebra, the sorts of things introduced by 7th grade.

These are data from 1990, seven years after we were declared a "nation at risk." Eighth graders in 1990 were only in first grade when the National Commission on Excellence in Education made that sober pronouncement. But we haven't significantly turned the situation around. Why not?

Perhaps the biggest reason is that people aren't changing their actual behavior at what I'm going to term the "retail" level of education. There's a kind of widespread schizophrenia in which people seem, on the one hand, to acknowledge that we have a very serious national education problem but also seem, on the other hand, to be reasonably content with their own and their children's education and with their local schools. The nation may be at risk but "I'm all right, Jack." Here is some evidence:

First, the children think they're doing well, even when they're not. A recent international comparative assessment (of math and science performance among 13 year olds) found American youngsters at or near the bottom. That part did not surprise me. What staggered me were the responses to the background question asking the children to agree or disagree with the statement, "I am good at mathematics." It turns out that U.S. youngsters led the world in believing

themselves to be good at math, even while trailing the world in actual math performance. A recent Harris survey shows a similar pattern among recent graduates of our high schools. Included in the interview sample were 511 young people who are four to eight years out of high school. Sixty-eight percent of them claimed that they had learned math well while in school. Sixty six percent said they had learned to write well. Seventy-eight percent said they had learned to read well. Keep those numbers in mind: 68, 66 and 78 percent. Because it's important also to know that when a group of employers was asked to rate the high school graduates they've recently hired along the same three dimensions, the favorable ratings were 22, 12 and 30 percent. And when, in the same survey, a group of higher education people was asked to rate the high school graduates entering their colleges along those three dimensions, the favorable ratings were 27, 18 and 33 percent.

Many parents also seem reasonably content with their children's education. On that same Harris poll, when asked how well the schools had prepared their daughters and sons, among parents whose progeny went from high school into jobs the favorable ratings for those three subjects were 65, 56 and 67 percent. Among parents of those who headed to college, the positive evaluations were 71, 77 and 82 percent -- actually higher than the youngsters' self-appraisals!

The annual Gallup education poll asks parents to grade public schools in general, the schools of their own community, and the school attended by their eldest child. The response pattern has been stable for a decade. Parents display low opinions of the nation's schools, middling opinions about their local schools, and high opinions of their own child's school. In 1991, they gave "honors" grades ("A's" and "B's") to schools-in-general just 20 percent of the time, while rating the public schools of their own community "A" or "B" 51 percent of the time. As for the school attended by their eldest child, it received high marks from a remarkable 73 percent of parents.

Teachers also say that they are generally content with their schools. On an earlier Harris survey, sponsored by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company and released in late 1989, 92 percent of teachers averred that their present school is providing a good or excellent education to its students. Administrators, too. A survey found that 90 percent of superintendents and 88 percent of principals award "honors" marks to their own schools and school systems. Fewer than two percent gave marks below "C."

Local school board presidents are interesting hybrids. When Emily Feistritzer of the National Center for Educational Information asked them in 1989 to appraise public education in the nation as a whole, the scores they gave resembled those of the general public: Just 33 percent handed out honors grades. But when asked to evaluate the schools of their own community -- institutions over which they preside as school board leaders -- they echoed the teachers and administrators: 79 percent conferred "A" or "B" grades and none gave failing marks.

Consider the implications for education reform: If children think they're doing pretty well, if parents think their children are doing well, if people think their local schools are doing well, and if teachers and administrators in those schools agree with this appraisal, as do local policymakers, why should anyone feel inclined to alter his or her actual behavior, to demand different results from themselves or their children, or to agitate for significant changes in the schools their children attend?

Yet if the actual behavior of actual people doesn't actually change in millions of individual cases, there is no reason whatsoever to expect our averages and aggregates to change. Our outcomes will remain flat. And that, I suggest, has at least something to do with why the results of our reform efforts to date have not been more positive. It also says to me that any education improvement plan that does not deal directly with the "complacency problem" is doomed to failure.

Why have we failed to get the message across at the retail level? I can only speculate. Americans

tend to be optimists to start with. We think pretty well of ourselves. We don't much like bad news. We're inclined to believe that things tend to get better, not worse.

We also suffer from what Dr. John J. Cannell calls the "Lake Wobegon Effect" of current state and local testing programs -- the phenomenon that finds virtually everyone to be performing above the "national average" -- and we have a flood of upbeat press releases pouring from state and local education agencies, nearly always asserting that results are good and getting better.

Our elected officials have also let us down by not looking us in the eye and saying: "When I talk about educational melt-down, Mr. and Mrs. Abernathy, I'm talking about your Johnny and Janet and the school they attend, not about somebody else's children or the schools across town."

But another possible explanation also concerns me greatly. There is some evidence that young Americans are behaving rationally when they don't study very hard or learn much in school.

Outside the yuppie elites clawing their way into Yale or Stanford, it turns out that few Americans actually reap significant rewards from studying hard and learning a lot. Children ordinarily get promoted from one grade to the next pretty much regardless of how they do. Report cards customarily consist of good news and cheery, upbeat comments, no matter the actual level of performance. High school graduates entering the work force earn the same (for as long as 10 years out of school) whether they take hard courses and earn high grades or enroll in gut classes and get C's. Their employers merely ask whether they received a diploma; nobody ever looks at their transcripts, let alone compensates them differently according to their school records.

Higher education is just as unhelpful. Admission to most colleges and universities requires merely that you be able to walk through the door and write a check; only a tiny fraction of prospective college students seeks admission to competitive campuses. For most people, entry to the nearby state university is a sure thing, no matter what their high school record shows.

Think about it. If we don't differentially reward high achievers -- or penalize low performers -- why should youngsters study hard and learn a lot, particularly when they have so many enticing distractions and short-term gratifications? Remember, they and their parents think they're doing OK in school. So, in the main, do their teachers and principals.

The complacency factor and the dearth of real world incentives aren't the whole story, however. We've also shoved some other vexing issues under the rug. Let me note five more that particularly perturb me:

One, we haven't been paying much attention to the truism that people only learn that which they study. No state yet requires all its youngsters to take the full array of academic high school courses that the National Commission on Excellence in Education termed the "new basics" in 1983: four years of English, three years each of math, science and social studies, two years of foreign language and half a year of computers. Because these courses are not required, few students take them. There's been some improvement in course-taking patterns in recent years, at least among college-bound students, but we have a huge distance still to go. To some extent, we are flagellating ourselves because our children haven't learned things that, in reality, many of them haven't even been exposed to.

Two, another neglected truism holds that people learn things in rough proportion to the amount of time they spend studying. Yet the time factor has barely been touched in the course of our reform efforts. As a result, American youngsters spend less time engaged in academic learning than anyone else in the industrial world. We have shorter school days and years; our children do less homework. They are more apt (at the secondary level) to spend their after-school hours working at jobs. Is it any wonder that they wind up knowing less than their age-mates in other lands? I

suspect that no reform scheme that fails to deal with the time factor will make much difference in the outcomes of American education.

Three, until very recently, we haven't been clear about our goals, about what an adequately educated young American would actually look like. Not long ago, Ernest Boyer compared education to "an industry that's unclear about its product, and thus is hopelessly confused about quality control." The governors and President Bush have begun to correct this situation, with their six big (and, to my eye, commendable) national education goals for the year 2000.[2] Goals, incidentally, that the American people overwhelmingly endorse, if the Gallup results are to be believed. But only a handful of states have embraced these, or any other explicit goals. This is a non-trivial matter. Only when we can describe the results we seek do we have a prayer of attaining them.

Four, it's not just that we haven't known where we're heading. We also haven't known enough about the progress we're making. Our information feedback and accountability systems are wholly inadequate for the task at hand. We don't really know much about how well our children are learning or how well our institutions are doing at the many levels where we need that information: the individual youngster, the classroom, the school building, the local district, the state and the entire nation. People take most seriously that which is measured and reported. Student learning outcomes at these six levels have not been satisfactorily measured or reported. And there is considerable resistance to rectifying that situation.

Five, finally, we assign too many things to schools that they cannot do, and we do a weak job of enlisting others in their missions. When they are effective, schools can do a good job of imparting cognitive learning to children: history, chemistry, literature and so on. But they are not powerful enough instruments to prevent adolescent pregnancy, redistribute income, stop the plague of drug abuse, halt the spread of AIDS, etc. Nor do they have enough leverage, enough time.

To put this in perspective, a child reaching her 18th birthday has been alive for about 158,000 hours. If she has attended school without miss -- no absences for 6 hours a day, 180 days a year, for 12 years -- she will have spent almost 13,000 hours in school. If we add kindergarten, the number increases to 14,000 hours. But that is only 9 percent of her time on Earth. Consider what this means in terms of the leverage of formal education, if much of what goes on during the other 91 percent is at cross purposes to the values and lessons of school.

Yet schools keep getting such additional duties thrust onto them (rarely with any more time in children's lives) and they always agree to try. The sad fact is that they cannot solve these problems alone, and their willingness to try may let others off the hook. Spreading their efforts across too many fronts may also leave them effective on none.

Those are situations that don't just perturb me but that also impede our ability to revitalize the education system in ways that will yield better outcomes.

So what to do differently? What's the solution? Let me outline what I take to be 10 essential elements of a reformed education system. I go into these in detail in the book. Most of these points, I think it's fair to say, also parallel elements of the President's and Secretary Lamar Alexander's "America 2000" strategy.

First, we must set clear outcome goals and standards having to do with cognitive learning, spelling out the skills and knowledge that we'd like every young American, regardless of background, to reach by the threshold of adulthood. For starters, I'd embrace the six national goals spelled out by the President and the governors, particularly goal three, which says that, "American students will leave grades 4, 8 and 12 having demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter including

English, mathematics, science, history, and geography."

Second, once we have an outcome standard, we should relate our concept of compulsory school attendance to achieving it, rather than attaining some arbitrary birthday.

Third, we must recognize that getting essentially everybody up to a reasonable standard of intellectual attainment before they exit the formal education system is going to mean that most young Americans are going to have to spend a far larger fraction of their lives learning academic things than they are accustomed to doing today. This means changes in kids' lives. Frankly, it also means lifestyle changes for parents and families.

Fourth, what I've said implies a fairly substantial core curriculum throughout entire school systems, states, perhaps the whole country. How much of the total school curriculum should be swept into this core is up for discussion. That there should be one, it seems to me, is self-evident.

Fifth, outside that core, there should be much variety among schools as to the rest of the curriculum, huge variation as to pedagogy, and great diversity concerning things like school climate, schedule, even the nature of the instructional setting. As far as I'm concerned, there should also be a good deal of variety in who runs the schools and the auspices under which they operate.

Sixth, implicit in the previous point is lots of school-site management. That, rather than central planning, is how authentic diversity arises, and how those engaged in delivering instructional services are most apt to get invested in what they're doing. Such site management can go quite a distance. In Chicago, it now includes the power to hire and fire the principal. It could equally include the ability to contract with independent providers for all sorts of services, from lunch to security to specialized instruction of various kinds.

Seventh, with schools encouraged to differ in many ways and to manage their own affairs, it stands to reason that students and their parents must be allowed to choose among them on the basis of those differences. I don't just mean those families fortunate enough to get into magnet schools or gifted and talented programs, or to pay for private schooling. I mean every child and family.

It is a public policy sin to require a student, against his will and his parents' wishes, to attend a poor school that he wouldn't go near but for compulsion when there is a better one not far away that he would prefer, if only it were permitted. I believe that one of the main sources of inertia and complacency in education is the captive audience that we guarantee every public school, regardless of its quality. I also believe that the chief barriers to integration in this society are now the district and municipal boundaries that function like educational Berlin Walls. They've torn down the one in Germany. How about demolishing our own?

Choice, let me add, also extends to teachers and principals. Everybody in a school ought to want to be there.

Eighth, for all this to work, there needs to be a first-rate information feedback and accountability system, such that everyone can see how individual children and whole schools, even whole states, are doing. Accountability in education can be visualized as a three-legged stool.

The first leg is knowing what your goals are and having clear standards by which to know when they are achieved.

The second is having reliable information as to whether those standards are being met at every level of the enterprise where this matters. (That's six levels: the child, the classroom, the school building, the district, the state and the nation.)

The third leg is what I call consequences. When the information feedback system signals that goals are being met, good things should happen to people. When the data indicate that the goals are not being achieved, however, something must change -- some sort of intervention must occur -- or we can be certain that the goals will continue not being achieved.

Ninth, we need to integrate parents far more directly and intimately into the work of formal education. This is commonly assumed to be the toughest nut of all to crack, and it may well be. Nor am I referring only to what happens in school. Parents are the single most important influence in the 91 percent of children's lives spent outside school. They aren't the only influence on what happens during that time, of course, but they are much the strongest.

Engaging parents in choosing the school is part of the solution. Parent participation in education governance is another. Explicit parent education programs are another. (Missouri is doing this to particularly good effect.) Parent-teacher-student contracts may be yet another. Much more imaginative use can also be made of technology to assist the school to reach the home and vice versa.

Tenth, and last, we need to make sweeping changes in how we select and employ the professional personnel who work in our schools. That nine percent is pretty precious, and we don't dare squander any of it. We should be seeking crackerjack principals and teachers in many places, not just among graduates of teacher colleges and administrator training programs. We should be differentiating their roles within the school, and paying them according to those differences, as well as according to their demonstrated competence, the demand for their particular specialty and the difficulty of their assignment. We should create incentives and rewards so that those who are good at what they do are properly thanked and compensated. But when someone doesn't cut it -- well, let's never forget that we have an education system for the benefit of its consumers, not its producers. Let's keep real clear on whose interests matter most.

The ideas I've been laying on you may sound radical, but the American people are ready for them. They are far more ready, I think it's fair to say, than is the education establishment. Let me share some more findings from the latest Gallup education poll. I'm going to be somewhat selective, pulling out 10 items that seem to me especially interesting and significant. The overriding point I want to make is that people are ready -- at least say they're ready -- for sweeping change in education.

First, in terms of the six national goals, people set high priority by each of them, from 80 to 90 percent support. They do not have equally high hopes of achieving them by the year 2000, but I don't think that should be taken as reason not to take them seriously. We must beware of the worst kind of self-fulfilling prophesy here, in which lack of confidence that the goals will be reached translates into not even trying to attain them.

Second, a question asked, "If a public school in this community does not show progress toward the national goals within a reasonable time, would you favor or oppose not renewing the contracts of the principals and the teachers in that school?" Fifty-seven percent of respondents say they would favor this; 32 percent are opposed.

Third, "How do you feel about extending the public school year in this community by 30 days, making the school year about 210 days or 10 months long? Do you favor or oppose this idea?" Fifty-one percent in favor -- more than half for the first time in the history of the Gallup survey -- and 42 percent opposed. (On a companion question about extending the school day by an hour, however, while support has risen to 46 percent, 48 percent are still opposed.)

Fourth, "Would you favor or oppose requiring the public schools in this community to use a

standardized national curriculum?" Sixty-eight percent yes, 24 percent no.

Fifth, "Would you favor or oppose requiring the public schools in this community to conform to national achievement standards and goals?" Eighty-one percent yes, 12 percent no.

Sixth, "Would you favor or oppose requiring the public schools in this community to use standardized national tests to measure the academic achievement of students?" Seventy-seven percent yea, 17 percent nay.

Seventh, "In some nations, the government allots a certain amount of money for each child's education. The parents can then send the child to any public, parochial or private school they choose. This is called the 'voucher system.' Would you like to see such an idea adopted in this country?" Fifty percent in favor, 39 percent opposed. (Among black and inner-city residents, incidentally, support for vouchers rises to 57 percent.)

Eighth, "Do you favor or oppose allowing students and their parents to choose which public schools in this community the students attend, regardless of where they live?" Sixty-two percent yes, 33 percent no (69 to 25 in the non-white population).

Ninth, "As a way of keeping students in high school, one state has passed a law that takes away driver's licenses from school dropouts under age 18. Would you favor or oppose such a law in this state?" Sixty-two percent would favor, 32 percent would oppose.

And tenth, "In most school districts, policy decisions and changes are made by the school board and its administrative staff. In a few districts, however, some of these decisions are made by councils composed of local public school teachers, principals, and parents. Which way would you prefer to have policy decisions made in the schools in this community -- by the school board and its administrative staff or by a council of teachers, principals and parents?" Seventy-nine percent in favor of the councils of teachers, principals and parents, just 11 percent in favor of such decisions being made by the school board and its administrative staff.

I'll wind up by noting the obvious paradox. On the one hand, the data indicate widespread public receptivity to fundamental changes in the education system. On the other hand, the same surveys reveal widespread complacency about the performance of the education system as it is today.

Can both be true? And what is the message therein about what to do, both in the country as a whole and here in Minnesota?

Notes

[1] Chester E. Finn, Jr., *We Must Take Charge: Our Schools and Our Future* (New York: Free Press, 1991).

[2] The national education goals, as set by President Bush and the nation's governors in 1989, to be met by the year 2000:

1. All children in America will start school ready to learn.
2. The high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent.
3. American students will leave grades four, eight and twelve having demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter including English, mathematics, science, history, and geography; and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds as well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our modern economy.
4. U.S. students will be first in the world in science and mathematics achievement.
5. Every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.
6. Every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning.

IS THERE A ROLE FOR PRIVATE AND PAROCHIAL SCHOOLS IN THE EDUCATION REVOLUTION?

Chester E. Finn, Jr.

Minnesota Federation of Citizens for Educational Freedom
Bloomington, Minnesota
November 9, 1991

My topic this morning is the curious situation private education finds itself in amid the broader education reform crosscurrents of the early 1990s. Some of what I'll be saying is based on my book.[1] Some is more speculative, based on enthusiastic but tentative efforts to understand what's going on and to predict what may happen in the next few years.

In late September 1991, the first national report card was issued on where we stand vis-a-vis the six national education goals.[2] That report contains a lot of bleak news, some of it familiar, some new.

Many of these data derive from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), with which I spend a good deal of my life these days. These results are worrisome, except at the lowest levels, where there's a bit of good news, namely that just about everyone who sticks with school acquires basic literacy and numeracy. Consider the 1990 math results, for example:

Ninety-eight percent of eighth graders, it turns out, can add and subtract whole numbers -- the sort of math commonly introduced by third grade. In that important sense, we have successfully made it "back to the basics," and I think most people would agree that was worth doing. It's when we get to the higher levels of competency that attainment rates plummet. Only two-thirds of eighth graders, for example, can multiply and divide and do two-step problems, i.e. the level of difficulty associated with the fifth-grade math curriculum. And a mere 12 percent of them are successfully handling fractions, decimals, percentages and simple algebra, the kinds of topics generally introduced by seventh-grade. That's pretty poor. So is the 12th grade performance, which finds fewer than half our high school seniors succeeding with seventh grade math and a mere five percent with the understanding of geometry and algebra that denotes readiness for college-level work.

Similar results confront us when we examine performance in other core subjects such as reading, writing, science, history, geography, civics and literature. You're also aware that average SAT scores have been falling for the past four years, wiping out most of the modest gains they had made earlier in the 1980s, and that ACT scores are essentially flat. You're acquainted with the testimony of business leaders concerning their trouble finding adequately educated people to hire; the fact that remedial education is the fastest-growing activity on many university campuses; and the international comparisons that continue to show us at or near the back of the pack, at least among industrial nations.

So the news for the country as a whole is that we're not yet doing very well at all, despite the valiant and expensive reform efforts of the past decade.

What about private schools, many of you are wondering. One can draw some cheer if one is interested only in comparing private with public, but it's fairly chilly comfort when examined in absolute terms.

In the eighth grade, for example, while the average public school student was scoring 264 on the NAEP math scale, the average student in Catholic schools was scoring 278 and the average student

in other private schools was scoring 274. (Note the intriguing fact that non-Catholic private school students surpass the Catholic school students in math in fourth grade, but lag slightly behind in grades 8 and 12.)

At grade 12, as Albert Shanker of the American Federation of Teachers has been pointing out with great glee, the public-private gap narrows considerably. The average student in public school scored 295; those in Catholic schools averaged 302; and those in other private schools averaged 301.

Yes, there is still a private school edge. No, it's not very wide, at least not in 12th grade, at least not in math. More troubling to me is that even the private school performance simply isn't as good as it ought to be. Putting it bluntly, the average private school 12th grader is functioning in math at the level of decimals, percents, fractions and simple algebra, i.e. the kind of math commonly introduced into the curriculum around the seventh grade. And just four percent of private high school seniors are functioning at the level that roughly describes readiness for college-level math.

Personally, I think results such as these shed little glory on education's non-government sector.

Let me hasten to add that the private school edge is wider in some other subjects tested by NAEP, notably writing. And several other sources of data are brighter. The federal government's "NELS-88" survey of eighth graders, for example, which included tests of reading, math, science and history, reports that Catholic school students fared better than public school students in all but one of those subjects, and that independent school students outscored Catholic school students in all four subjects.

The SAT data also throw a few rose petals toward the private sector. John Chubb and Terry Moe report that the SAT score gap between public and private schools has widened by 16 points over the past decade, to its current difference of 41 points, and that most of that gain has come since 1987. In fact, to quote a line from a draft article they've written, "the national decline in SAT scores has been confined entirely to the public sector. . . . Scores in private schools are up."

I also want to emphasize that there's plenty more to education than test scores, and that there are lots of sound reasons to send one's child to private rather than public school, if that is one's choice. In the main, they are safer. They work harder at individuality and creativity. And private school completion rates are higher.

Test scores, moreover, reveal little about private school success in such domains as ethical development, character formation, religious understanding, physical fitness and various other results that many families seek from their children's school experience.

We also have a good deal of evidence from James Coleman's research, from Chubb's and Moe's, and from other sources, that in general private schools are more effective than their public sector counterparts, not least because they tend to embody more of the characteristics we associate with school effectiveness, traits such as a strong positive ethos, high expectations for all students, orderly learning environment, clear sense of institutional direction, vigorous team spirit and adroit instructional leadership. These features are not the exclusive province of private education, to be sure, but they are more commonly found there than in the public sector. We also find in the private sector stronger responsiveness of schools to their "clients"; the absence of a big central office bureaucracy; and greater propensity to generate what Coleman calls "social capital," which is especially important for at-risk youngsters.

The significance of these features for good schools, of course, explains the current push for school restructuring in the context of public education reform. It's also a sizable part of the argument for enhanced consumer responsiveness in our educational arrangements, to be achieved at least partly

through "choice" policies. The theory says that if we had more youngsters attending private schools, or at least schools with attributes currently associated with the private sector, we'd find ourselves with more effective institutions and better-educated youngsters.

And that, of course, is the burr under Al Shanker's saddle and lots of other people's. That's the dark cloud on the horizon they are scanning; the menace to the enterprise of public education as it is presently defined. Or so they insist.

Let's pause for a bit of recent history. There was a time not long ago, in the late '60s and early '70s, when many reasonable people feared that private schooling in the United States was heading for extinction. Enrollments fell, revenues dwindled, many schools closed, and the private sector's "market share" declined from about 13 percent of all elementary-secondary students to barely 10 percent.

There ensued a great clamor for public aid to rescue private education. That was the hey-day of support for "tuition tax credits," of the Alum Rock voucher experiment, and vigorous questing for other forms of direct or indirect government subsidy. It was also a time of intense concern with church-state separation issues associated with such aid, and with other volatile policy issues such as the possible role of private schools in foiling public school integration.

Essentially no real governmental aid was forthcoming (though a number of states indirectly assist private education by subsidizing textbooks, bus transportation and the like). But by the early 1980s the threat to survival seemed to have passed. Private school enrollments stabilized and actually increased their "market share" back to about 11 percent (where it remains), as public sector enrollments shrank. Though private school closings remained newsworthy, particularly among Catholic parochial schools, the proliferation of fundamentalist Christian and other "new" categories of schools meant that education's private sector as a whole, far from vanishing, displayed all the vital signs of a dynamic enterprise.

There are many possible explanations for the revival. National economic prosperity surely had something to do with it. Widely publicized problems in public education did, too, not just the academic decay suggested in A Nation at Risk, but also drugs, violence, etc. There were, in fact, good reasons for education-minded parents to seek out private schools for their daughters and sons.

Lately, however, many private schools have again fallen on hard times. This is particularly evident in the Catholic school sector and in parts of the independent school sector. Schools are again closing, enrollments are down and applications are flagging.

Again, the reasons are multiple. Demographics. Recession. Rising costs. Changing priorities within the Catholic Church. The perception that public schools in many states and localities are at least striving to improve themselves.

I've noted previously that there's also a sort of convergence under way as public school reform takes up more and more of the features traditionally associated with private education. I wrote a long piece in the National Association of Independent Schools publication, Independent School, about two years ago, pointing out six examples of such emulation. I'm not going to give that whole speech this morning but let me briefly recapitulate the six points:

First, more public schools are installing -- and more of their students are taking -- a solid academic core curriculum. This is most conspicuous at the secondary level, where a compelling reason to enroll in a private school has long been that every student is obliged to take a full portion of meaty courses in English, math, science, social studies and foreign languages. During the wildest excesses of the curricular smorgasbord in public education, this was a real asset for the private

sector. But today we see many states and localities imposing order on that smorgasbord and obliging students to take more academic courses before graduating from public high school. Both the College Board and the ACT folks have new data indicating substantial movement in this direction over the past four or five years. Among SAT takers in 1991, for example, 40 percent had taken a total of 20 or more high school courses in the six academic areas of English, math, science, foreign languages, social science and art, compared to 34 percent of whom this could be said in the class of 1987. Another way of saying it is that the average number of academic courses taken by the 1991 SAT class was 18.7, compared to 18.2 in '87. Not a dazzling increase, at least from where I sit, but a move in the right direction.

Second, public schools are "specializing" more -- and more families are gaining the right to choose among them. In fact, the so-called public school choice movement is one of the most remarkable education policy developments of the day, as is the diminishing opposition to it by much of the public education establishment. This is no surprise to Minnesotans; you more-or-less started the modern era of public school choice. There are some ironies here, however. One reason for the lessening hostility to public school choice schemes is that the perceived threat of choice policies that include private schools has made all-public school choice policies appear far more palatable. We'll come back to that in a bit.

Third, some public schools are beginning to acquire that time-honored private school characteristic known as building-level autonomy. Sometimes called "school-site management," sometimes "restructuring," sometimes "professionalism," as yet it is more talked about than done. But in places where it is actually under way -- in Dade County, Florida, in San Diego, perhaps most dramatically in Chicago -- it is being closely watched by educators across the land. To the extent that it really catches on, we can expect that public schools following this path will come more and more to resemble private schools in key respects.

Fourth, where there is authority there must also be accountability for its effective exercise. And increasingly the school building, rather than the system, is becoming the chief "accountability unit" in American public education. The private school has always been that. If it does not satisfy its customers and patrons, it either changes and thrives or dwindles and dies. But public schools have customarily been insulated not only from market pressures but also from other sorts of interventions. That's changing, whether one looks at Kentucky's new school law, or at state takeovers of district management in New Jersey, or a dozen other examples.

Fifth, public schools in some jurisdictions are getting much the same flexibility in teacher hiring that private schools have always enjoyed. The well-known rule of thumb has long been that public schools must hire state-certified teachers, while private schools may hire whomever they like. As alternative certification programs spread, however, as well as such ventures as Teach for America, more public schools have wider options with respect to teacher hiring. Don't overlook the fact that this includes the ability to hire away some of the best private school teachers and pay them substantially higher salaries.

Sixth and finally, though it's still got a long way to go, we find renewed concern by some public schools with the development of ethical and moral sensibilities and the formation of sound character on the part of their students.

We could probably lengthen that list of convergences. My point is that, while emulation may be the sincerest form of flattery, to the extent that public schools come to resemble private schools in key respects, the competitive advantage of private schools will diminish. Perhaps that's already happening. There's evidence from a few communities with especially vigorous public school reform efforts that public sector enrollments are growing and private school enrollments falling.

Meanwhile, back on the ranch, interest in choice policies that would include private schools has

risen at a rate that has pleasantly surprised me. A couple of years ago, I thought aid for private school students was a lost cause, essentially a dead issue except in academic journals and meetings such as this one. I supposed that our politics simply wouldn't permit any such thing to happen, and that education outside the public sector monopoly would accordingly have to fend for itself, meaning that in most instances it would remain the preserve of the relatively fortunate.

It's now clear that I was at least partly wrong, perhaps because I was wearing "inside the beltway" blinders and not seeing what was going on out here in the so-called "real world."

The first and most dramatic development was, of course, enactment of the Wisconsin voucher program. You're undoubtedly acquainted with this measure, passed by the state legislature under the prodding of a remarkable coalition of a radical black Democratic legislator, Polly Williams, and a conservative Republican governor, Tommy Thompson. In a nutshell, it provides that up to 1,000 low-income children from inner-city Milwaukee can attend secular private schools at state expense. More than 300 did so during the first year of the program and I'm told that the number is up this fall. The school establishment went ballistic, of course, and the program is under legal and constitutional siege. In fact, the state supreme court heard the case argued about a month ago.[3] That it passed in the first place, however, transformed the definition of what is possible within the politics of American education policy in a way that I frankly did not expect to see. The actual, said Kant, proves the possible.

Then came the 1990 Oregon referendum to permit state aid to all manner of private schooling, even including tuition tax credits, which I thought we had seen the last of. The measure lost, after the public school establishment made immense efforts to defeat it. But a third of the voters supported it.

Now Detroit's Board of Education is weighing a proposal to allow some private schools in that city to function as if they were public and to receive public funds, a most interesting idea that envisions what I'd call hybrid public-private schools. Something similar is under discussion in Cleveland. The little town of Epsom, New Hampshire has been giving tax breaks to parents who enroll their high school children in private schools. You've had the high school graduation incentives program here in Minnesota for a while, enabling students to enroll in secular private schools at public expense under certain circumstances, and if I'm reading the papers correctly you've just added to that program the possibility that sectarian private schools may also become part of the arrangement.

You've adopted a charter schools plan that, while not going as far as proponents had hoped in permitting avowedly private schools to receive public support, nevertheless extends Ted Kolderie's important insight that those managing schools that serve the public need not do so only within the traditional bureaucratic framework. A major push toward a sweeping choice referendum is now under way in California. The Golden Rule Insurance Company is providing Indianapolis youngsters with private school scholarships under an arrangement that could become a precedent elsewhere. Maryland has contracted with a private firm to run that state's largest facility for disruptive, delinquent juveniles.

Pennsylvania came very close to a choice program that would include private schools. Other forms of educational "privatization" are also spreading, from the Education Alternatives company headed by former St. Paul superintendent David Bennett, a private firm that is managing schools on behalf of public systems; to the management of Chelsea, Massachusetts's schools by private Boston University; to Chris Whittle's plan to start a national chain of proprietary schools.[4]

At the national level, two developments deserve mention. First, the New American Schools Development Corporation, a privately funded activity that is very much part of the Bush/Alexander America 2000 strategy, will soon make awards to "design teams" to plan new schools for the 21st

century and they've made clear that these can be designs for public schools, for private schools or for hybrids. And, to my total amazement, one of the most liberal parts of the U.S. Congress, the House Education and Labor Committee, recently voted to permit states to use funds from a new block grant to help support the costs of choice programs that may include private schools. True, the measure must go through more hurdles before it is enacted; true, other aspects of the block grant scheme were designed in such a way as to minimize the likelihood that any private school choice will actually happen. We may never see a nickel from this program actually making its way to private schools or their students. But as someone once said of a dancing dog, the noteworthy point is not that the dog dances clumsily, but that he dances at all.

The Washington Post remarked of this House committee action that, "Choice was once wielded as a grenade, something to blow up any negotiation. This time, one of the most liberal House committees wielded it offensively, fearing more destructive amendments on the floor." While neither the Committee nor the Post was thrilled by this development, I do sense that perhaps we're on the threshold of a new era in education policies and politics, one in which choice advocates may even be heading for the driver's seat rather than chronically stuck in the trunk or up the exhaust pipe. The writer recounting the House committee action in the latest Education Week terms it a "sea change on the choice issue." [5]

Other developments are doubtless under way hither and yon that I don't know about. The point is that Milwaukee is no longer a unique case. More and more people are having radical thoughts about fundamental educational overhauls, including private school options. More and more people are persuaded by the Chubb-Moe political analysis. More and more people are agreeing with Messrs. Bush and Alexander that any schools serving the public and willing to be accountable to the public may legitimately be viewed as public schools, whether they are managed by government agencies or non-governmental entities. (Let me note parenthetically that the Bush administration has fundamentally changed its own policy in this regard during the past three years, from a public-choice-only philosophy at the beginning to a far more comprehensive view today.) More people may also be glancing overseas where they see that countries providing aid to their private schools, or at least to students enrolled in them, don't find the sky falling down. Look at Britain, with its new "opting out" and choice policies.

This has led some objective observers, such as Chris Pipho of the Education Commission of the States, writing in the October issue of the Phi Delta Kappan, to conclude that "while a full voucher program may not become common in the states, a number of variations on the concept look increasingly possible."

All of this, of course, has pushed the hot buttons of the public school establishment. Their anxiety level is heightened by the prospect that a more conservative Supreme Court may fundamentally alter the First Amendment establishment and free-exercise clause jurisprudence that, since the late 1940s, has made it virtually impossible to provide any significant government aid to the majority of private schools. If that happens, I believe the politics of the matter could take another dramatic turn.

So we find major mobilizations of energy and resources to oppose efforts at the state and local level that would adopt private school choice policies. We find really heavy lobbying in Congress to prevent enactment of the sorts of choice incentive programs that Lamar Alexander and the president proposed. We find the head of the Pennsylvania AFL-CIO asserting at a mid-summer teacher rally that "school choice is unAmerican." And we find other near-tantrums, such as Al Shanker's effort to prove that private schools aren't any better than public.

The general public, of course, is far more favorably disposed to a broad range of choice. A survey by the National Association of Independent Schools -- admittedly a self-interested outfit -- found

that 87 percent of Americans think private schools are good for the country because they provide alternatives for parents. If cost were no object, 33 percent say they would send their children to independent schools; 18 percent would opt for parochial schools. That's a total of 51 percent. Forty-five percent say they would choose public schools.

The 1991 Gallup education survey data are interesting, too. On a question about the desirability of a "voucher" system that would enable parents to send their children to "any public, parochial or private school they choose," 50 percent of respondents were favorably disposed, compared to 39 percent opposed. Incidentally, the tally among non-white respondents was 57 to 31.

On the other hand, a question asking people what they think of "allowing students and parents to choose a private school at public expense" resulted in just 26 percent in favor, 68 percent opposed. A lot of this lies in how the question is phrased, of course. Different phrasings tap into different values and anxieties. It must also be noted that among those in favor of allowing private schools to be chosen at public expense, 64 percent also believe that private schools accepting tuition payments from the government should be accountable to public school authorities. This is an important matter that you will want to ponder. My hunch is that aid to students attending private schools is all but certain to bring more government regulation down upon those private schools than they've previously experienced.

One notable political development of the past couple of years is that the prospect of private schools being included in a choice policy has made those versions confined to the public sector begin to resemble plain vanilla. Public school choice, on the Gallup survey, finds 62 percent of Americans in favor, just 33 percent opposed. Thirteen states have already enacted policies that permit students, under various circumstances, to enroll in public schools outside their district of residence. Minnesota led the way, but a dozen others have followed. The education establishment shows signs -- not universal, but signs, nonetheless -- of having acquiesced in this idea. Yesterday's radical idea can thus become today's conventional wisdom if something yet more radical is proposed. Public school choice may not yet be quite vanilla, but it's moving into the realm of chocolate and strawberry. Private school choice is still out there with pistachio, rocky road and tutti frutti. This growing acceptance of public school choice by its former opponents would not, I think, have happened without the perceived threat of private schooling.

From the standpoint of education reform in general, I believe this is a healthy development. Any choice is better than none. But what lies ahead for the private sector? I'm not too sanguine today, despite all the developments on the choice front. Let me give you four reasons for concern.

First, the federal policy process remains virtually paralyzed with respect to private schools. The Bush administration has changed its mind, but Congress is still resisting quite vigorously. The temporary breakthrough at the Education and Labor Committee turned out not to amount to much, at least in the short run. Hence I still believe that any significant policy action in the foreseeable future that may benefit private education is likely to happen outside the Beltway.

Second, the radicalization of public school reform means that ever more dramatic changes, and in time probably some real improvement, will occur within public education. The "New American Schools" effort at the national level is likely to accelerate this process. It's almost certainly a good thing for the country, but I'm not sure it's good for the self-interest of private schools.

Third, today's private schools could find themselves outflanked by ventures such as Chris Whittle's ambitious plan to invent and then install a nationwide chain of new propietary schools that will meet world-class standards, operate all year long, begin with children at age one or two, etc. If Whittle succeeds in this, and I think his record should make us take this possibility seriously, it may turn out that whatever market share he captures will come more from traditional private schools than from public.

Other private firms are moving in, too. There's no reason at all that the various franchised tutoring programs and after-school programs -- "American juku," we can call them -- could not evolve into full time schools. The Japanese themselves are moving into this market, with the Kumon Institute program that has had such success in after-school math instruction and is now adding English. Imagine American students being taught English by a Japanese firm through a program their parents pay for. And imagine that program someday turning into a full-fledged school.

Fourth, I must come back to the test scores where we began. American schools are coming to be judged more by their outcomes, less by their good intentions, resources and ambience. National goals, national report cards, national standards, the possibility of national exams for individual students -- these are bound to accelerate the tendency to judge schools by their measurable results, and to make more information available to the public by which such results can be appraised, state by state and school by school. In time I think parents will be able to ascertain how their Michael and Rosemary are doing in relation to the national goals and standards.

That seems to me a healthy development, even a necessary one, for the country. But a preoccupation with cognitive learning outcomes will not necessarily be beneficial for private schools. There are several reasons for this, including the homogenization of curriculum that is likely to result. In purely pragmatic terms, however, the main anxiety it should trigger within private schools is that their scores may not demonstrate results that are enough superior to those of public schools to justify in parents' minds the substantial out-of-pocket expense of producing them.

Is this scenario amenable to change? I think so, but only if private schools change, too. The full burden cannot rest on public policy. Even after discounting for his political agenda and organizational self-interest, you understand, I am sure, that there is more than a grain of truth to what Al Shanker has been saying.

Personally, I've been a bit disappointed by how little advantage private education seems to take of its extraordinary opportunity for differentness. It seems to me that these schools outside the government sector should be hotbeds of change in all sorts of traditional assumptions and practices. I'm talking about fundamental matters such as how much of a child's life needs to be spent studying and learning in order to live successfully in the 21st century; in how many different sorts of sites and settings education can occur, what real world class standards would look like, what the best assessment system in the world would be, how to meet the needs of at-risk children, and so on.

Yet private schools seem to me to resemble each other in most respects more than they differ from each other, and to resemble public schools in most fundamentals, too. I guess I have to say to you that private education does not seem to me to be making maximum use of its independence. It isn't "different enough," it isn't yet doing as well as it should and it isn't improving fast enough.

There remain powerful reasons for permitting choice among schools for parents and children, however, and let me emphasize that they would be powerful without regard to test scores or other such measures. It's something close to a public policy sin, in my view, to make a child, against his and his parents' wishes, attend a bad school that he wouldn't go near but for the coercion when there's a better school not far away that he'd rather go to if only it were permitted.

It's something close to a public policy sin to guarantee every school, good, bad or indifferent, a captive audience. No institution does its best when it sees no rewards for strong performance -- or real consequences for non-performance.

It's something close to a public policy sin to allow wealthy people to select the public or private

school they prefer while keeping poor people trapped in schools near where they are able to afford to live, especially since those are often the least successful schools in the land.

And it's just plain crazy policy in a society that permits people a wide choice of what to eat, what to wear, where to live, what doctor to use, what church to worship in, what newspaper to read, what day care program to send their toddlers to, what college to send their 18 year olds to -- crazy not to permit those same people to decide what elementary or secondary school they'll send their children to.

For all this to change, however, we need a fundamental political revolution. Lamar Alexander calls it a populist revolt. We need to turn education from a system dominated by the interests of its producers into one that runs and is run for the benefit of its consumers. (And I define consumers very broadly here.)

The big problem I see is that while the producers are exquisitely well-organized, indeed are often the most potent political forces in the entire state or locality, education's consumers aren't very well organized at all. That's one reason I welcome the increasing activism of governors, legislators and business leaders. I tend to think of them as surrogates for education's consuming public -- at least as the parts of that public that are organized enough to do much. But they aren't really sufficient. That's why we need organizations such as Citizens for Educational Freedom. But that's also why you've got your work cut out for you.

Keep up the good work. May you persevere and ultimately prevail in the heavy lifting that lies ahead. And thanks for inviting me to be with you this morning.

Notes

[1] Chester E. Finn, Jr., *We Must Take Charge: Our Schools and Our Future* (New York: Free Press, 1991).

[2] The national education goals, as set by President Bush and the nation's governors in 1989, to be met by the year 2000:

1. All children in America will start school ready to learn.
2. The high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent.
3. American students will leave grades four, eight and twelve having demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter including English, mathematics, science, history, and geography; and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds as well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our modern economy.
4. U.S. students will be first in the world in science and mathematics achievement.
5. Every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.
6. Every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning.

[3] The Wisconsin Supreme Court, in early March 1992, ruled 4-3 that the Milwaukee choice program is constitutional. The Wall Street Journal wrote on March 10: "The court decision will allow 554 low-income students to continue attending nonsectarian private schools using a state scholarship worth $2,500 a year. That's less than half of what it costs to educate a child in Milwaukee's public schools. An outside evaluation of the 18-month program recommended that it be continued. The parents involved are highly pleased, which is crucially important for the kids' attitudes toward school."

[4] Mr. Whittle, on February 27, 1992, announced that he had hired Dr. Finn, along with six other men and women, including John Chubb, to design a network of 200 corporate-owned elementary and secondary schools by 1995.

[5] Early in 1992, the U.S. Senate voted to permit only public school choice in the new federal block-grant program it was considering. A few weeks later, Rep. William D. Ford, D-MI, chairman of the House Committee on Education and Labor, reneged on a compromise he had struck with the Bush administration and decided to impose a similar restriction.